



Friends –

Unacceptable.

That is the only word that came to mind when I read the latest missive from New Direction NJ, the dark money group whose campaign this week sent an email to its statewide list accusing us, their fellow Democrats, of passing a “scam budget” that “screws working people in our state.”

Let me be very clear: I am proud of the budget we passed last week. It reflects the great work of the Budget Committee, led by Chairwoman Pintor-Marin , and reflects our shared Democratic values. I am proud we provided property tax relief for our most vulnerable residents, increased funding for New Jersey Transit, made a record pension payment and provided more than \$1.4 billion in surplus funding. In fact, the Governor himself has agreed that our budget funds nearly all of his priorities.

Like you, I have devoted my career to the ideals of the Democratic Party. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined that a group of fellow Democrats would use such divisive language against other Democrats. It is unacceptable. In all my years of public service, I have never seen this kind of rhetoric about a policy disagreement.

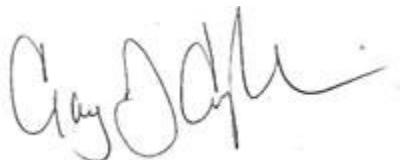
What is worse is that the email from New Direction is unsigned. Clearly the author(s) did not have the courage to attach their names to a letter disparaging other Democrats. I urge the Governor to hold those who did write it accountable.

Moreover, it is unclear what is hoped to be accomplished by sending out a letter attacking fellow Democrats just several months in advance of an election. It is puzzling to me that it was sent days after the Legislature had fulfilled its constitutional duty to pass a balanced budget. There is no need for this letter. The budget is in the hands of the Governor, who has the ability to exercise any of the various options available to him under the law.

I began my career, like many of you, at the local level. In my decades of serving our party, I have learned some valuable lessons. Leaders are judged by their ability to lead,

and bring people together to get things done, not by dividing people. I will continue to lead our chamber to the best of my ability, by listening to different opinions, taking various priorities into consideration and forging a path forward for the best of our state. I look forward to working with the Governor and the Senate to achieve that end, free of rhetoric seeking only to divide us, through theatrics that do nothing to advance our common goals.

Sincerely,



Craig J. Coughlin  
Speaker of the New Jersey General Assembly

